

Irwin-Brues House
(Henry Brues House)
(Isaac Irwin House)
201 North Front Street
Wheeling
Ohio County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-183

HABS
WVA,
35-WHEEL
17-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

IRWIN-BRUES HOUSE

HABS No. WV-183

Location: 201 North Front Street, Wheeling, Ohio County, West Virginia.

Present Owner William J. Dolan.

Present Occupant: William J. Dolan and family.

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: This house was built for Isaac Irwin on Wheeling Island about 1853 shortly after the Wheeling Suspension Bridge opened up the island for development. The Brues family was long associated with Wheeling and lived in this classic Greek Revival style house for nearly one hundred years. It is noted for the unusual and graceful "hanging" staircase which has no visible means of support.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: C. 1853. Although no exact date for construction is available, development of Wheeling Island was not possible until 1849, when the Suspension Bridge was erected. A map published in 1853 identifies this house as one of 36 standing on the Island.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Built on lots 200 and 201 on the east side of what was the Elm Street of Zane's Island Addition, references tracing the title of these lots may be found in the Ohio County West Virginia Deed Books.

1849 Deed 1 November, recorded in Deed Book 33, page 137.

Ebenezer Zane (Estate) by
Henry Moore, Trustee
to
Isaac Irwin
\$750 for Lots 200 and 201 and Water Lot 9 of
Zane's Island Addition

- 1859 Deed, 26 September, recorded in Deed Book 44, page 302
Isaac Irwin and wife
to
Elisha W. Paxton
\$5300 for Lots 200 and 201 and Water Lot 9 of Zane's Island
Addition.
- 1865 Deed, 12 June, recorded in Deed Book 49, page 51.
Elisha W. Paxton
to
Josiah Updegraff for
Phillip H. Moore and Octavia Moore
\$6000 for Lots 200 and 201 and Water Lot 9 of Zane's
Island Addition.
- 1867 Deed, 22 October recorded in Deed Book 55, page 125.
Phillip H. Moore et al
to
Henry Brues
\$6100 for Lots 200 and 201 and Water Lot 9 and two fractional
lots 97 and 98 of Zane's Island Addition.
- 1885 Deed, 12 November, recorded in Deed Book 77, page 517.
J.R. Cowden, Trustee
to
Catherine Berger
\$5,050 for Lots 200 and 201 of Zane's Island Addition.
- 1885 Deed, 13 November recorded in Deed Book 77, page 518.
Catherine Berger
to
Caroline Berger Brues
\$5,050 for Lots 200 and 201 of Water Lot 9, of Zane's
Island Addition.
- 1919 Deed 19 March, recorded in Deed Book 164, page 240
Caroline B. Brues
to
Charles Henry Brues
\$10 for Lots 200 and 200 Water Lot 9 of Zane's Island Addition.
- 1949 Will, probated 11 April, recorded in Will Book 27, Book 196.
C.H. Brues
to
Security Trust Company, Trustee
"Fourth: All the rest, residue, and remainder of my property,
real and personal...I give, devise, and bequeath unto Security
Trust Company... to take, hold, manage, convert, sell... for
the best interests of my trust estate."

1952 Deed, 5 September, recorded in Deed Book 345, page 353.

C.H. Brues Estate, by Trustee

to

William J. Dolan and wife

Lots 200 and 201 and Water Lot 9 of Zane's Island Addition
platted out by Henry Moore.

4. Alterations and additions: Mr. and Mrs. William Dolan have lived in this house with their 12 children since 1952. There have been many changes made to provide accommodations for this large family. Mr. Dolan has turned the north wing into an office. This necessitated the installation of two partitions and a bathroom. The bathroom, which is located in the north wing, is accessible only from the main section of the house. It serves as a private bathroom for the downstairs master bedroom. (The northeast parlor has been converted into the Dolan's bedroom.) The northwest parlor has been in a state of renovation for several years now. The pipes and wiring are all exposed. and the room is full of odds and ends.

The Dolans have made few changes in the three remaining first floor rooms, those on the south side. They are considering renovating the kitchen. The hall woodwork has been refinished and antiqued by the Dolans.

Upstairs there are five rooms. One without windows is used for storage. Three are used as bedrooms. The northwest bedroom has been converted into a combination bathroom-storage room. The mantels have been removed from the second floor fireplaces.

5. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

The 1868 Wheeling Directory identifies Mr. Henry Brues as a partner in the dry goods firm of Brues and Sanders. His address was given as Elm Street (the original name for North Front Street) on Wheeling Island. Callin's Wheeling Directory of 1892 lists Mrs. Caroline Brues as a widow, residing at 98 North Front Street with her two daughters, Carrie and Henrietta, and her son, C. Henry Brues.

C. Henry Brues, who began as a "collector" according to the 1892 Directory was a native son of Wheeling. "Charles Henry Brues was born at the family homestead on North Front Street, in Wheeling, on the 9th of December, 1872, and is a son of Henry and Caroline (Berger) Brues, who still maintain their home in this city, where the father has long been a prominent business man and influential citizen."

1. Wingerter, p.877

- . Initially associated with the wholesale and retail harness business, C. Henry Brues, known as Hal, became an employee of Wheeling Electric Company and since 1901 has served as the company cashier. Hal was very civic minded and took "a lively interest in public affairs of a local order and in all that tends to advance the material and civic welfare of his native city."² He served one two-year term as a member of the city council and served two two year terms as president of the municipal water board.

In May, 1909, Hal was elected a member of the city board of control "and he has since continued in tenure of this position, in which he has given excellent service in the furthering of progressive measures in the various departments of municipal activity."³ The Dolan family have lived in this house for over twenty-five years. Mr. Dolan is an accountant and Mrs. Dolan has served as a member of the board of education.

- 2. *ibid.*
- 3. *ibid*

C. Sources of Information:

Callin's Wheeling Directory 1890-93.

Wheeling Directory 1868

Charles A. Wingerter. History of Greater Wheeling and Vicinity, Volume I. Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1912.

Interview: Mrs. Mary Dolan, September 25, 1976.

Prepared by: Candace Reed
Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural Character: The house is a two-and-a-half story brick Greek Revival cottage with a tetrastyle pedimented entrance portico and symmetrical one-story wings.
- 2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions:
Main building approximately 44' north to south x 36' east to west.
Wings approximately 14' north to south x 22' east to west.
2. Number of bays:
Main building 5 bays.
Wings 1 bay each.
3. Number of stories:
Main building 1 1/2 stories with dormers.
Wings 1 story each.
4. Layout shape:
Main building rectangular.
Wings rectangular.
5. Foundations
Cut sandstone painted dark brown.
6. Wall construction, finish and color: brick laid in running bond painted beige.
7. Structural system, Brick bearing walls spanned with timber throughout.
8. Porches stoops: There are classical pedimented porticoes centered on the east and west facades. Both porticoes are identical in detailing, except that the west portico has paired Doric columns, whereas the other has single columns. The east portico is raised about three feet above the ground. The steps are at the northwest corner. The west portico is raised about 18 inches with steps in the center of the west side.
9. Chimneys: There are six single brick chimneys. Four are on the main building, two on north facade and two on the south facade. Two chimneys straddle the ridges of the two wings at their ends.
10. Openings:
 - a Doorways and doors: The two main entries are identical in detailing. The west one is set back in the wall. It has recessed side lights and a rectangular transom.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The windows on all sides have a flat lintel and no decorative detailing. The windows of the main block are larger than the windows of the wings. The west windows have louvered shutters. There were shutters on the first floor windows. All windows are double-hung with six-over-six-lights.

Roof:

The main building has a gable roof that runs parallel to the west facade. The ridge line of the wings is about ten feet below the ridge line of the main block. Both porticoes have gable roofs perpendicular to the west facade. All roofs are covered in asphalt shingles.

Cornice, eaves:

The main building has a cornice that is boxed with a sloping soffit and a plain frieze. The wings have similar but smaller cornices. Both the main block and wings have returns of the cornice and frieze of about thirty inches in length.

Dormers, cupolas, towers:

Dormers are located on the main building with two on the east incline and two on the west side. Each has pilasters on the sides and a plain frieze and a triangular pediment above. The dormers are made of wood and painted white.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The basement is accessible only from the exterior on the north side. The basement is divided into five rooms.

The original floor plan was symmetrical about a central hallway. The hallway has an east-west axis. On the first and second floors there are two rooms on either side of the hall. The south wing contains one large room, and the north wing has been divided into three smaller rooms

2. Stairways: The main stair is of particular note. It is a hanging "U" shaped stair with no visible means of support. The stair is located on the north wall and set back from the east and west walls. Another stair is now blocked off in the north wing basement.
3. Flooring: Soft wood floors are carpeted. There is tile flooring in some rooms.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are plaster with wallpapered or painted surfaces. There is a plaster medallion on the hall ceiling.
5. Doorways and doors: The trim of both doorways and windows is eared with battered sides in a Greco-Egyptoid manner.

6. Decoratives features: The two fireplaces in the room north of the hallway have finely detailed cast iron coverings for their openings.
7. Lighting fixtures: An electrified four-light gas chandelier of post Civil War vintage hangs in a first-floor room.

D. Site:

General setting: The building faces west on a slightly sloping site away from Front Street to the Ohio River in the rear. The building sits back approximately 15 feet from Front Street. On the north there is a driveway. There are no outbuildings.

Prepared by: John McCrae
Architectural Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September 1976

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, HABS Principal Architect, in cooperation with the Friends of Wheeling, Inc. The measured drawings were made during the summer of 1976 under the supervision of John M. McCrae (University of Florida) with architectural technicians Mark L. Hall, Foreman, (Pennsylvania State University); Edward C. Freeman (Arizona State University); Ruthie D. Wiley (Mississippi State University); Alan G. Wilig (City College of New York); and Architectural Historian Candace Reed (George Washington University). The photographs were taken in 1977 by HABS Photographer Jack E. Boucher.